

Determining the Need and Effectiveness of Current Linguistic Services in Idaho's Health Care System: *Summary Survey Results and Recommendations*

During the fall of 2006, a medical language survey was developed and mailed to all acute care hospitals, certified rural health clinics, and federally qualified health centers in Idaho. The purpose of the survey was to evaluate the extent to which Idaho's healthcare system provides linguistically appropriate care and identifies language as a barrier in delivering care for limited English proficient* (LEP) patients. A total of 93 facilities received the survey and 57 responded, for an overall response rate of 61%.

Summary results include:

- Approximately 20,000 outpatient visits occur with LEP patients each month; this represents 16% of the total number of outpatient visits
- 56% of respondents have written policies for providing interpretive services
- 24% of respondents report their staff is highly aware of their facility's policy for providing interpretive services
- 9% of respondents always provide written follow-up instructions in a language the LEP patient can read
- 57% of respondents always provide verbal instructions in a language preferred by the LEP patient
- 27% of respondents have a method to conduct a formal assessment of the language needs of their service area
- 64% of respondents have official signage translated into Spanish
- 55% of respondents believe the demand for language services is growing

Summary recommendations for lead agency include:

- Develop a policy template for providing medical interpretive services in healthcare facilities
- Develop orientation training materials to increase awareness about policies and regulations related to medical language services
- Develop a tool for assessing service area language needs
- Provide cultural sensitivity training for healthcare organizations



Please contact Mary Sheridan at (208) 332-7212 or Sheridam@dhw.idaho.gov for questions or a copy of the full report. Project conducted by Idaho State University-Boise Center with funding from the federal Office of Minority Health.

*A limited English proficient (LEP) patient is "unable to speak, read, write or understand the English language at a level that permits him/her to interact with health and social service agencies and providers."